

# People, Culture, Skills

May 2022



People are at the heart of everything we do, and are integral to a thriving and inclusive sport and physical activity sector

Before taking a closer look at the sport, physical activity and leisure sector in Essex, it is important to recognise that we are one industry contributing to the wider Essex economy. The Essex Skills Improvement Plan realigns post 16 education around the needs of the employers, to train people for the skills gaps that exist now and in the future. It is also important to highlight that this document extends from the core theme that runs throughout the Fit for the Future Strategy\* – People are at the heart of everything we do, and are integral to a thriving and inclusive sport and physical activity sector.

## A Better Future

To enable organisations in Essex, Southend and Thurrock to thrive, we need to progress beyond the constant cycle of resignations, vacancies and onboarding, and instead foster a culture of developing people, who in turn help grow and improve their organisations. We need staff and volunteers to be appropriately skilled, motivated and competent, and we must work harder to retain this talent.

If we can create people-centred cultures, where the workforce stay, develop and progress; then recruitment and onboarding resource will reduce and investment can focus on new and improved skills. In turn this will help organisations deliver more impact, more efficiently. Furthermore, by removing historic systemic barriers, we can create the best conditions for a highly skilled, diverse workforce who will be equipped to meet the wide-ranging needs of Essex communities.

### Vision

Essex, Southend and Thurrock is a great place to work and volunteer in Sport and Physical Activity.

### Mission

Inclusive, people-centred, resilient and ambitious organisations who promote positive learning cultures, offering the workforce and participants a quality experience, free from harm.



\* Fit for the Future is a 10-year Sport and Physical Activity Strategy for Essex, Southend and Thurrock, which launched in July 2021

# The Current Context

Up until now, skills and people support has been focused on helping organisations fill vacant roles and train individuals appropriately in response to immediate labour market need.

Priorities highlighted in the Essex Skills Strategy (2018) and subsequent Training Needs Analysis (2021), confirmed that labour market challenges and skills gaps remain the same despite significant investment. This has reinforced the need to look differently at the sector's challenges and look through a longer-term lens.

Evidence shows that in order to be more effective and impactful we must put time and effort into longer term ambitions which will:

- Reduce workforce churn
- Incentivise existing staff and volunteers to help them flourish, grow and progress
- Maximise opportunities to share and learn, supporting organisations to grow
- Create clear, identifiable career pathways



**1.1 Billion** spent annually on Training and Education in Sport and Physical Activity in UK

## Skills Gaps

Continue to address the immediate skills and training needs in the short term. This aligns with the data from the Training Needs Analysis and Skills Advisory Panel.

## A Better Shared Understanding

Develop a better and shared understanding of “good” people development and increase the knowledge around the importance of people-centred organisations, and their role in enabling growth.

## Better Data and Insight

Collect and share better information on employee/volunteer experience, their levels of satisfaction and the needs/motivators of future workforce.

WHERE  
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WHAT  
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WHAT IS  
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### More People-Centred Organisations:

Drive and realign investments to focus on high-quality organisational development by enabling organisations to put their people at the heart of everything they do.

### More Informed Educators and People Developers:

Working with schools, higher and further education, and independent training providers, to better anticipate the organisations skills requirements for the future.

### Inclusion:

Organisations developing evidence-based approaches in building a more diverse workforce, that reflects the communities they serve. They welcome people from all backgrounds to play, volunteer or work.

### Careers:

More evolved understanding of career pathways to provide information, advice and guidance.

## The Principles

This approach is designed against a framework of improved PEOPLE, CULTURE and SKILLS, which draws on research that demonstrates how committed and engaged individuals align to cultures that positively impact performance.\*

**People:** A more reflective workforce of society who experience good levels of job satisfaction, have clear routes in and through the sector, and where diversity of thought and human-centred leadership are nurtured.

**Culture:** Organisations that care for and support their workforce, whilst providing a safe and effective environment, (including fit for purpose policies and governance) are able to grow more sustainably, as well as execute their operations more effectively to keep customers safe from harm.

**Skills:** A rapidly changing world and active labour market requires organisations to work together more on solving mutual skills challenges. The use of tax-payer money requires sensitive and thoughtful spending that aims to strengthen organisations rather than subsidise short-term training needs without a plan to address skills shortages. Partnering with education and utilising existing mechanisms, such as Apprenticeships and Traineeships is crucial in enabling more education-leavers to move directly into vacant and satisfying roles.

Reference: Shahzad, F., Luqman, R. A., Khan, A. R., & Shabbir, L. (2012). Impact of organizational culture on organizational performance: An overview.





#### People:

Seeing sport and physical activity as an attractive sector to work or volunteer in, as well as investing time and effort in their personal development or in progressing their careers.

#### Sector:

A culture of peer learning, sharing and exchange where flow of great data and insight is better used in relation to People, Culture and Skills.

#### Organisations:

More deliberate and considered cultures, prioritising retention and offering better experience of work through enhanced support.

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## What does a thriving sector look like?

### Our Sector

#### Connected and tackling wider challenges

A learning and sharing sector, providing great career support and deploying effective inclusion tactics – where there are thriving organisations and an increasingly skilled workforce who want to stay and progress within the sector. Sector has lower churn, higher role satisfaction and more resilient and successful organisations with great cultures.



### Our Organisations

Resilient employers and deployers

- Healthy inclusive cultures
- Organisations given opportunities to learn together
- Workforce given space to learn and grow
- Developed understanding of being a thriving organisation

### Our Individuals

Satisfied volunteers and employees

- Great experience of work
- Developing appropriate skills
- Engaged in career communication

### The Jobs and Opportunities

Attractive, appropriate opportunities for all

- Flow of information and data
- Informed potential workers
- Clear and realistic career pathways

# Next Steps

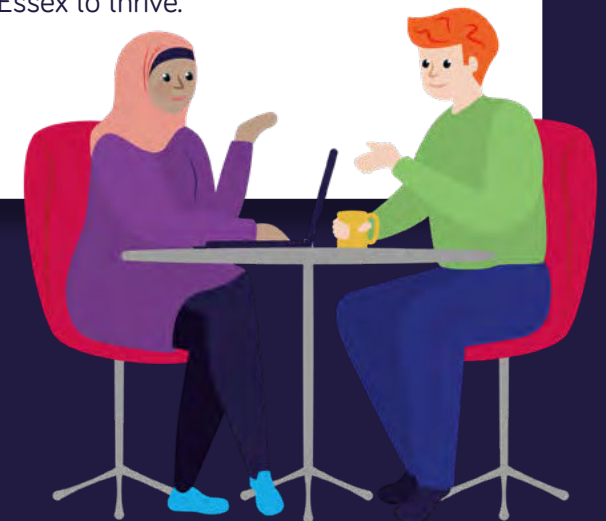
This document sets out the scale of the problem and why there needs to be change, but to achieve the vision we need a collective commitment to do things differently.

## Real change takes time but to start the conversation can you ask yourselves:

- Are you actively recruiting and retaining talented people with clear routes into and through your organisation?
- When was the last time you had open conversations with your workforce about how they feel?
- Do you know if you are perceived as a great place to work, volunteer or play?

## Active Essex is committed to leading this change and will support the sector in Essex, Southend and Thurrock by:

- Listening and assimilating trends and data about working and volunteering
- Take a leadership role in connecting, facilitating, and creating spaces to learn together
- Co-invest and play an active role in the people and organisational development space
- Continuing to prioritise the development of a supportive culture to nurture individual talent, allowing Active Essex to thrive.





# Things to Consider

## Risks

### External economic situation

If inflation continues there may be too many financial pressures for organisations to fund and resource development work.

### Truly new approach

This approach is largely untested within the sport and physical activity sector. Partners like Sport England are in an exploratory phase. We may absorb some of the early testing costs, as there is little to learn from.

### Organisational readiness

We do not yet know how many organisations are ready and motivated to address these issues.

### Related sectors

Improving the experience of work around in organisations that are considered outside of the sport and physical activity sector, is still meaningful, but may not be counted/trackable.

## Mitigations

### Liaise with others

Stay close to progress with organisations such as Sport England, CIMSPA, UK Coaching, Further and Higher Education Institutions. This helps to ensure shared learning as we embark on this new approach.

### Learn from outside the sector

Draw on knowledge from outside the sector and continue to engage with research and practitioners in other sectors.

### Considered investment

Maximise the chances of success through effective change by going where the energy and buy in is.

### Government Direction

Aligns to the 'Skills for Jobs' government white paper, aiming to strengthen links between employers and further education; ensuring employers are at the heart of defining skills needs.

## Inputs

### Time and commitment

This process is time-consuming, and change will be slow. Commitment to improvement in the longer term is crucial.

### Skills

This is a new area for the sector and therefore knowledge in these types of interventions is limited, so we need to access better support through this plan from beyond the sector.





> [www.activeessex.org.org/people-culture-and-skills](http://www.activeessex.org.org/people-culture-and-skills)

